

REPLY SYSTEM

The present invention relates to a reply system and, more particularly, to a system adapted, although not exclusively so, for automated call back in response to incoming voice telephone calls.

BACKGROUND

Simple answering machine-type devices are known for the purpose of providing a means for letting an incoming 10 caller know that the called party is not available to take the call. Typically such machines also include the ability to allow the calling party to save a recorded message for subsequent play back by the called party when the called party becomes available to listen to phone messages.

15 Answering machines, by their nature, are not portable devices in the same way that, for example, a mobile telephone is now considered a portable device or as a personal digital assistant (PDA) is now considered a portable device.

20 In today's highly mobile world answering machine-type devices are simply not capable of sufficient portability or flexibility to meet the needs of today's highly mobile communication consumers.

It is an object of the present invention to address or 25 ameliorate one or more of the above mentioned disadvantages.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF INVENTION

Accordingly, in one broad form of the invention there is provided a system for automated reply to a calling party who has initiated an incoming call from said calling party to a called party; said system comprising in the event said called party is indicated by said system as unavailable to answer said incoming voice call, said system instigating delivery of a pre-set visually communicable message to said calling party.

10 Preferably said visually communicable message is enabled as a graphically communicable message.

Preferably said visually communicable message is in the form of a transmission of digital data.

Preferably said incoming call is a voice call.

15 Preferably said incoming call is a text message or other visual message.

Preferably said graphically communicable message is an SMS message.

20 Preferably said graphically communicable message is a message containing both text and graphical symbols.

Preferably said graphically communicable message additionally includes voice or other audio information.

Preferably said graphically communicable message includes video content.

Preferably said called party is adapted to receive said incoming call on a hand-held device.

5 In a further broad form of the invention there is provided a system for automated reply as defined above.

Preferably said called party is adapted to receive said incoming call on a fixed landline hand piece.

Preferably said pre-set graphically communicable 10 message is determined by said called party.

Preferably said pre-set graphically communicable message is determined by a third party.

Preferably said pre-set graphically communicable message is determined, in part, by a third party and in 15 part by said called party.

Preferably said third party monetises said system by provision of content in said graphically communicable message which promotes said third party.

Preferably said pre-set graphically communicable 20 message is pertinent to the activity of said called party which prevented said called party from answering said

incoming call thereby to be informative to said calling party.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DRAWINGS

5 Embodiments of the present invention will now be described with reference to the accompanying drawings wherein:

Fig. 1 is a block diagram of a first embodiment of a call back system in accordance with the present invention;

10 Fig. 2 is a block diagram of call sequencing for both a mobile to mobile scenario and a fixed telephone line scenario suitable for use in conjunction with the system of Fig. 1;

15 Fig. 3 is a block diagram of a second preferred embodiment of the present invention;

Fig. 4 is a block diagram of a third preferred embodiment of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

20 With reference to Fig. 1 there is illustrated in block diagram form a call back system 10 in accordance with a first preferred embodiment. In this instance the system allows a calling party A to utilise, for example, mobile telephone 11 to make a voice call to a called party B associated with second mobile phone 12. In the event that second telephone 12 is switched off or otherwise designated

as unavailable to receive calls then gateway 13 transmits a graphically communicable message 14, in this instance in the form of an SMS text message, to the first mobile phone 11 of the calling party A for display on screen 15 of the 5 mobile telephone of calling party A thereby to inform calling party A of the situation, in effect, as to why the called party B is unavailable to receive calls.

Fig. 2 illustrates the situation in the upper block diagram for mobile to mobile communication, which is to say 10 where the calling party A of block 20 calls called party B of block 21.

In the case of a mobile to mobile telephone call when calling party 20 utilises a mobile phone (not shown) to call called party B party A is notified by a pre-recorded 15 announcement with words to the effect "This message is being diverted to the SMS call-back service" following which an SMS message 22 is dispatched to the mobile telephone display of calling party A, in this instance, communicating a message pertinent to the activity of the 20 called party B which prevented the called party B from answering the incoming call in the first place thereby to be informative to the calling party A.

In the case of the fixed line scenario the calling party, party A telephones the called party B via a fixed 25 telephone line. In the case where the handset (not shown) called by party A is set to "SMS call-back" then a

diversion to a message bank or equivalent electronic voice advisory line can be instigated which can advise words to the effect that an SMS call-back service will be put into effect. Subsequently an SMS message is sent to the handset 5 of party A advising of pre-set data ideally determined, at least in part, by party B and dispatched in the event that party B is unavailable to take the incoming call from party A.

With reference to Fig. 3 the original system of the 10 first embodiment of Fig. 1 is described where like components are numbered as for the system of Fig. 1.

In this instance additional data processing capability is placed in communication with gateway 13 and application server 22 in the form of web interface management unit 23, 15 reporting module 24 and database 25.

In turn database 25 communicates with a content manager 26 which can receive media from multiple sources including media feeds 1, 2, 3 as shown in Fig. 3.

The database 25 can interface with databases of, for 20 example, a telecommunications company 27, a database of a financial institution 28 and/or a database of an affinity program 29.

The arrangement is to add value to the visually 25 communicable message 114. This will be done in the situation where the message 114 initially includes text or equivalent data determined by the called party B and to

which is added third party data such as, for example, advertising indicia 115 for which the third party is prepared to pay to the provider (not shown) operating gateway 13 and application server 22 thereby, in this 5 particular instance, absorb the costs to the carrier of communicating the visually communicable message via SMS or equivalent to a handset operated by calling party A.

With reference to Fig. 4 the system 10 of Fig. 3 can be utilised as part of a unified messaging platform 100 10 which can support the situation where calling party A seeks to establish a voice call with called party B and following the failure of the voice call, causing to be transmitted a visually communicable message via server 110 to the display 115 of the handset of calling party A.

15 The system operates by the handset of called party B communicating its off status to master server 111 which ultimately communicates with server 110 for the purposes of sending an acknowledgement message to be displayed on the display 115 of the handset operated by calling party A.

20 The unified messaging platform 100 is further adapted to utilise databases of third parties thereby to "monetise" the dispatch of the visually communicable message to the calling party.

Third parties of interest may include a 25 telecommunications provider 116, a financial institution

117 and/or a rewards point or other affinity program provider 118.

Such databases can work in conjunction with the basic system originally described with reference to Fig. 1 whereby, as a minimum, third parties can seek to accept the costs of generating and transmitting the visually communicable message to the handset of called party A.

In particular forms the third party 116, 117, 118 will provide at least some of the content ultimately to appear 10 on screen 115 with the balance of the content deriving from a pre-set message determined by choice of the receiving party B.

The above describes only some embodiments of the present invention and modifications, obvious to those 15 skilled in the art, can be made thereto without departing from the scope and spirit of the present invention.